

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**BSA Sports Hub, Green Lane, Chesterton,
Bicester, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Maisie Foster

Site Code: GLC17/233

(SP 5538 2081)

**BSA Sports Hub, Green Lane, Chesterton,
Bicester, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Bicester Sports Association**

by Maisie Foster

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GLC 17/233

January 2020

Summary

Site name: BSA Sports Hub, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 5538 2081

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 6th to 13th January 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Maisie Foster

Site code: GLC17/233

Area of site: 1.65 ha of 2.48ha

Summary of results: Only 24 of the proposed 40 trenches were excavated during this period of trial trenching due to last minute changes to the specification of work requested by the client. In the areas examined, despite the potential for archaeological discovery on this site, only one posthole-sized feature of Iron Age date was recorded during the evaluation. Various geophysical anomalies investigated were shown to be of non-archaeological origin. Therefore, the majority of the site which has been investigated is considered to have low archaeological potential, but with an area around the Iron Age feature having some potential of uncertain significance.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Services, in due course, with accession code OXCMS:2020.3

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BSA Sports Hub, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Maisie Foster

Report 17/233c

Introduction-

This document reports the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at the Bicester Sports Association Sports Hub, Green Lane, Chesterton, Bicester, Oxfordshire (SP 5538 2081) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr James Hill of Adalta Real Ltd, The Byre, Home Farm Drive, Upton Estate, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 6HU on behalf of the Bicester Sports Association.

Planning permission (19/009340F) has been sought from Cherwell District Council for the change in use of agricultural land and extension of the existing Bicester Sports Facilities, including relocation and reorientation of existing pitches on site. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features, a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation has been requested. The results of this evaluation will provide information to establish an appropriate level of mitigation. This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the District Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. Modifications to the specification had to be made once work commenced on site, due to the client's concern that trial trenching would negatively impact the active sports pitches located within the boundary of the site. It was therefore only possible to excavate 24 of the originally intended 40 trenches. The original specification included the provision for a second phase of trial trenching to be undertaken should the original trenches encounter archaeological deposits. Those that were not excavated all lay within close proximity to the sports pitches in the north-eastern field (Fig. 2).

The fieldwork was undertaken by Maisie Foster, Beth Tucker and Jon Tierney between 6th and 13th January 2020 and the site code is GLC17/233. The archive is currently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course with accession code OXCMS:2020.3.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on a 2.48 hectare parcel of land south-west of the village of Chesterton near Bicester in north-east Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) of which 1.65 hectares were investigated (Fig. 2). It comprises two irregular parcels of land bounded by Green Lane to the north, an unnamed track and undeveloped fields to the east and further undeveloped field to the south and west. The M40 passes by to the west of the site. The northern section of the site is currently occupied by Bicester Sports Association and the Bicester and North Oxford Cricket clubs, with facilities accommodating cricket, football, rugby, archery and shooting, while the southern section is used agriculturally. The site is largely bounded by hedgerows except for parts of the eastern and southern boundaries. It lies on Cornbrash formation geology (BGS 2002) at a height of *c.* 70.85m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Baljkas 2018) supplemented by a brief written by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council and geophysical survey (Beaverstock 2018). In summary, the proposed site is located south of the Roman Road of Akeman Street and the Roman 'small town' of Alchester. The field immediately to the west of the site contained cropmark features of a trackway, enclosures and possible buildings which is thought to represent a Roman settlement. A cropmark of a Bronze Age ring ditch is also visible to the south-west of the site. Another cropmark feature can be seen on aerial photographs to the north-west of the site, currently under the existing rugby pitches, which may be of an archaeological nature. A hoard of Roman coins has been found in the field and it is thought likely that this represents the presence of a Roman villa somewhere in the vicinity.

A geophysical survey within the site (Beaverstock 2018) identified a series of magnetic anomalies, some of which corresponded to the previously recorded cropmarks, while others could be matched to features visible on early edition Ordnance Survey maps. Several other anomalies were recorded which may indicate the presence of buried archaeological features, particularly in the large southern field.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were:

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;

to determine if any prehistoric, Roman and Saxon deposits are present on the site;

to provide information to form the basis of appropriate mitigation measures, if necessary, to limit the damage to significant archaeological deposits; and

to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further investigation be required

A total of 40 trenches were intended to be dug, each measuring 30m long and between 1.8–2.2m wide. These were to be opened using a 360°-type machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Due to modifications to the specification requested by the client, only 24 of the 40 trenches were excavated due to damage the trial trenching would cause on the existing sports pitches on site. All spoil heaps were monitored for finds. Sufficient of any identified archaeological deposits were to be investigated by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above.

Results

All 24 of the accessible trenches were dug as intended with the exception of trench 24, whose length had to be considerably shortened due to a high density of unexpected underground services and manhole covers in the imitate area (Fig 2). The trenches measured 2.20m wide and between 29m and 32.4m long (excluding trench 24 which measured 6.5m) and between 0.28m and 0.70m deep. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned NNW-SSE and was 30.1mm long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m of topsoil and 0.12m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned NNE-SSW and was 29.8m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.16m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 3 (Pl. 1)

Trench 3 was aligned NW-SE and was 29.5m long and 0.7m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.43m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned N-S and was 29.4m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil and 0.16m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3; Pls 2 and 8)

Trench 5 was aligned SW-NE and was 29.9m long and 0.21m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.25m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. A posthole (1) was noted at 19.5m from the trench's SW end, which was half sectioned, showing it to be 0.5m in diameter and 0.13m deep. Its mid red brown silty clay fill (52) contained 27 small sherds of Iron Age pottery and two tiny fragments of animal bone.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned NW-SE and was 30.6m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil and 0.15m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 7 (Fig 4)

Trench 7 was aligned ENE-WSW and was 30m long and 0.32m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m of topsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 8 (Pl. 3)

Trench 8 was aligned close to N-S and was 29.5m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.05m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was aligned NW-SE and was 30.3m long and 0.59m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.28m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 10 (Pl. 4)

Trench 10 was aligned SSW-NNE and was 30.9m long and 0.56m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.19m of topsoil and 0.31m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was aligned WSW-ENE and was 30.9m long and 0.32m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.04m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 12

Trench 12 was aligned NNW-SSE and was 30.8m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.07m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 13

Trench 13 was aligned ESE-WNW and was 30.6m long and 0.53m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil and 0.20m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 14

Trench 14 was aligned NE-SW and was 32.4m long and 0.33m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.27m of topsoil and 0.03m subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 15

Trench 15 was aligned NW-SE and was 30.3m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 16

Trench 16 was aligned close to E-W and was 30.5m long and 0.28m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 17

Trench 17 was aligned N-S and was 30.1m long and 0.32m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.03m of subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 18

Trench 18 was aligned SE-NW and was 29.2m long and 0.28m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 19 (Pl. 5)

Trench 19 was aligned close to S-N and was 31.3m long and 0.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil and 0.08m of subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 20 (Fig 4)

Trench 20 was aligned NE-SW and was 29.7m long and 0.36m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil and 0.08m of subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 21

Trench 21 was aligned NNW-SSE and was 29m long and 0.4m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.11m of subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 22 (Pl. 6)

Trench 22 was aligned close to E-W and was 30.1m long and 0.4m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.05m of subsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 23 (Pl. 7)

Trench 23 was aligned ENE-WSW and was 29.9m long and 0.34m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.19m of topsoil overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Trench 24

Trench 24 was aligned W-E and was 6.5m long and 0.2m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil and overlying Cornbrash natural geology. No finds were recovered or features observed.

Finds

Later prehistoric pottery by Richard Tabor

The assemblage comprised 27 sherds weighing 16g, all from deposit 52 in post hole 1, trench 5. The sherds were allocated to fabric groups based on the material, size and sorting of the principal inclusions in accordance with guidelines for the recording and analysis of prehistoric pottery (PCRG 2010). The weights, fabrics, vessel parts and thickness of all sherds were recorded.

Two distinct fabrics were identified, both with grog inclusions. The 25 sherds in fabric GL1, probably from a single vessel, included in addition shelly limestone whilst very fine quartz was added to fabric GQ1 (Table 1). Crushed shell was dominant in plain early and well-represented in middle Iron Age assemblages at Slade's Farm Bicester, but grog featured only rarely in the early Iron Age assemblage, becoming common only in the late Iron Age (Williams and Woodward 2000, 233, tab. 7). Traces of furrowing on the GQ1 sherds were probably due to moulding in manufacture rather than decoration. The two joining sherds may derive from a fired clay object other than pottery.

Table 1. Distribution of fabrics by context (weight in g)

Trench	Cut	Deposit	GL1		GQ1		Total	
			no	wt	no	wt	no	wt
5	1	52	25	15.0	2	1.0	27	16.0

GL1 (medium) Friable, grey fabric with grey surfaces including moderate to common fine (<1mm) to medium (<2mm) crushed shelly limestone and sparse to moderate fine (<1mm), medium (<2mm) and rare coarse (<4mm) sub-angular red grog. May be smoothed.

GQ1 (medium) Friable, pink fabric with pink surfaces including moderate very fine (<0.2mm) to sparse fine (<0.5mm) sub-rounded quartz, sparse fine (<1mm) grog and rare to sparse fine (<1mm) top medium (<2mm) iron oxides.

Six amongst the most fragmented sherds in GL1 were from a probably necked, everted rim. Decoration on a shoulder in the same fabric comprised a horizontal line executed with a blunt tool limiting sharply incised near upright parallel lines. The rim form and decoration occur in early middle Iron Age assemblages in Oxfordshire, notably further south as a characteristic of the Long Wittenham-Allen's Pit group (Bradford 1942, 39; Cunliffe 2005, 101, figs. 5.4, A:11). In this instance form is a more reliable indicator of date than the fabric.

Environmental sampling by Joanna Pine

One soil sample was processed. The sample was floated and wet sieved to 0.25mm and air dried. No charred plant macrofossils were identified but a variable amount of charcoal was present. The sample 1 (posthole 1) contained 3g of charcoal. The charcoal recovered is available for future analysis for species identification if required.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

Two fragments of non-human bone were recovered from posthole 1 (52) in trench 5. Weighing just 0.5g, the pieces of bone were poorly preserved, with patches of erosion noted on the surfaces. One fragment was charred black, while the other was unburnt.

The unburnt fragment was a piece of tooth, from a medium to large sized animal (e.g. sheep/goat or cow). Due to the small size of the tooth fragment, it was not possible to accurately assess the specific animal size.

The charred fragment was fragile (easily damaged) and small in size, measuring a maximum of 0.9mm in length. The black colour indicates the fragment had been subjected to temperatures up to approximately 300°C (Holden *et al.* 1995a; b). It was not possible to identify the fragment even to general animal size category or skeletal element of origin. No further information could be retrieved from these small fragments of bone.

Conclusion

Due to concerns raised by the client, only 24 of the 40 agreed evaluation trenches were opened. Therefore the evaluation was not fully undertaken as set out in the agreed project specification.

Of the evaluation trenches opened, the majority revealed no deposits of archaeological interest and the various geophysical anomalies investigated were shown to be of non-archaeological origin. The trenching identified just a single deposit of archaeological interest, a posthole-sized feature dated to the Iron Age. The significance of this seemingly isolated deposit is unclear.

The area of the site we were allowed to examine (following the modified specification of work) is therefore considered to have low archaeological potential with the caveat that an area around trench 5 may have some additional potential.

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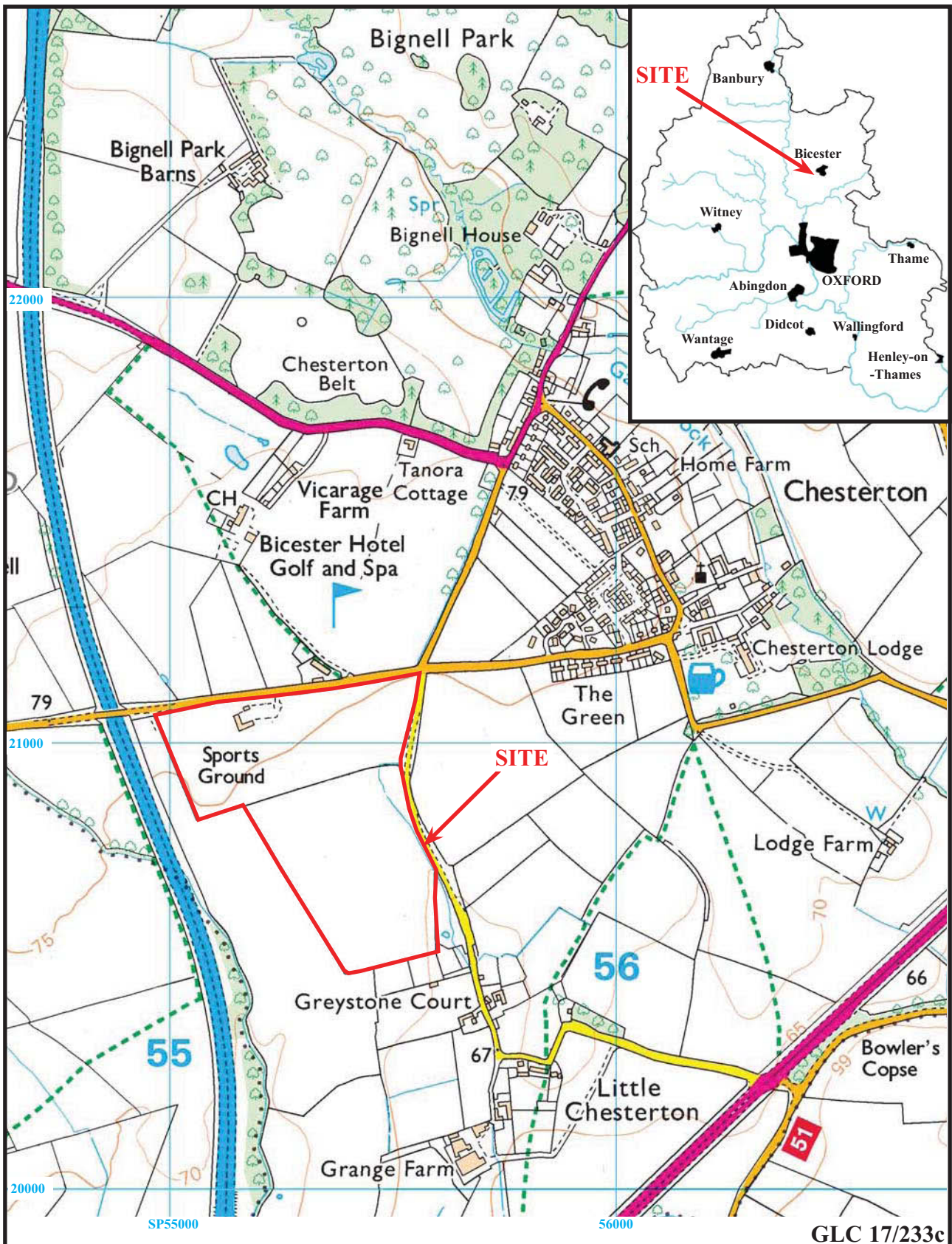
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	30.1	2.2	0.56	0–0.32m topsoil; 0.32m-0.46m subsoil; 0.46m-0.56m Cornbrash natural geology.
2	29.8	2.2	0.55	0–0.29m topsoil; 0.29m-0.45m subsoil; 0.45m-0.55m Cornbrash natural geology.
3	29.5	2.2	0.70	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.68m subsoil; 0.68m-0.7m Cornbrash natural geology. [Pl. 1]
4	29.4	2.2	0.43	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m-0.43m Cornbrash natural geology.
5	29.9	2.2	0.51	0-0.21m topsoil; 0.21m-0.46m subsoil; 0.46m-0.51m Cornbrash natural geology. Posthole 1 [Pls 2 and 8]
6	30.6	2.2	0.45	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.39m subsoil; 0.39m-0.45m Cornbrash natural geology.
7	30	2.2	0.32	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32m+ Cornbrash natural geology.
8	29.5	2.2	0.33	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.30m subsoil; 0.30m-0.33m Cornbrash natural geology. [Pl. 3]
9	30.3	2.2	0.59	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m- 0.50m subsoil; 0.50m-0.59m Cornbrash natural geology.
10	30.9	2.2	0.56	0-0.19m topsoil; 0.19m-0.50m subsoil; 0.50m- 0.56m Cornbrash natural geology. [Pl. 4]
11	30.9	2.2	0.32	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.27m subsoil; 0.27m-0.32m Cornbrash natural geology.
12	30.8	2.2	0.33	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.27m subsoil; 0.27m-0/32m Cornbrash natural geology.
13	30.6	2.2	0.53	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27m-0.47m subsoil; 0.47m-0.53m Cornbrash natural geology.
14	32.4	2.2	0.33	0-0.27m topsoil; 0.27m-0.30m subsoil; 0.30m-0.32m Cornbrash natural geology.
15	30.3	2.2	0.30	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.30m Cornbrash natural geology.
16	30.5	2.2	0.28	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.28m Cornbrash natural geology.
17	30.1	2.2	0.32	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.31m subsoil; 0.31m-0.32m Cornbrash natural geology.
18	29.2	2.2	0.28	0-0.28m topsoil 0.28m+ Cornbrash natural geology.
19	31.3	2.2	0.30	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.26m subsoil; 0.26m-0.30m Cornbrash natural geology. [Pl. 5]
20	29.7	2.2	0.36	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.28m subsoil; 0.28m-0.36m Cornbrash natural geology.
21	29	2.2	0.40	0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.34m subsoil; 0.34m-0.40m Cornbrash natural geology.
22	30.1	2.2	0.40	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.35m subsoil; 0.35m-0.40m Cornbrash natural geology.. [Pl. 6]
23	29.9	2.2	0.34	0-0.19m topsoil; 0.19-0.34m Cornbrash natural geology. [Pl. 7]
24	6.5	2.2	0.2	0-0.2m topsoil; 0.2m+ Cornbrash natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
5	1	52	Posthole	Early-middle Iron Age	Pottery



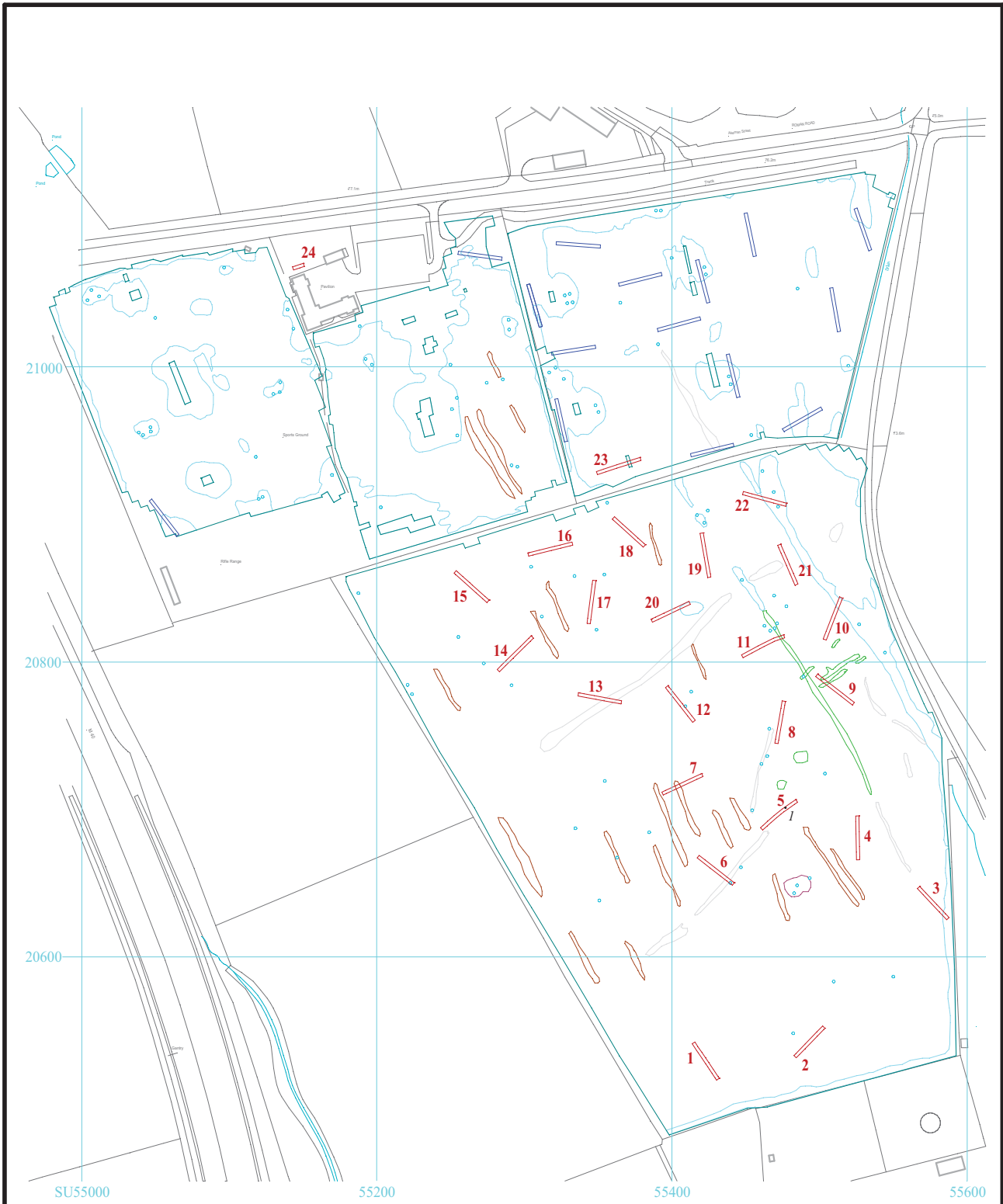
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Figure 1. Location of site within Chesterton and Oxfordshire.

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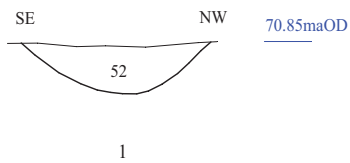
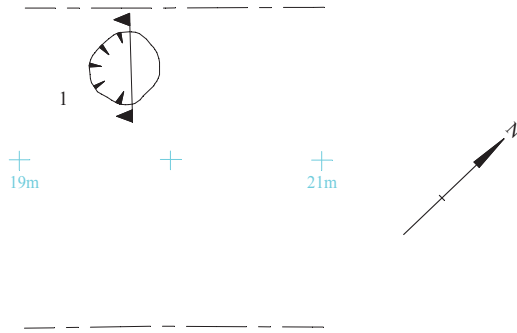
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Figure 2. Location of excavated trenches (red) and proposed trenches (blue), compared to geophysics anomalies.



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Trench 5



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Figure 3. Detail of Trench 5.

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Trench 7



Topsoil



Natural Geology (combrash)

Trench 20



Topsoil



Subsoil



Natural Geology (combrash)

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Figure 4. Representative Sections



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Plate 1. Trench 3, looking SE, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Trench 5, looking NE, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 3. Trench 8, looking SSW, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 10, looking NE, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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**BSA Sports Hub, Green Lane,
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Plates 1 to 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 19, looking N, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 22, looking NW, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 7. Trench 23, looking WSW, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 8. Trench 5, pit 1, looking SSW,
Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

GLC 17/233b

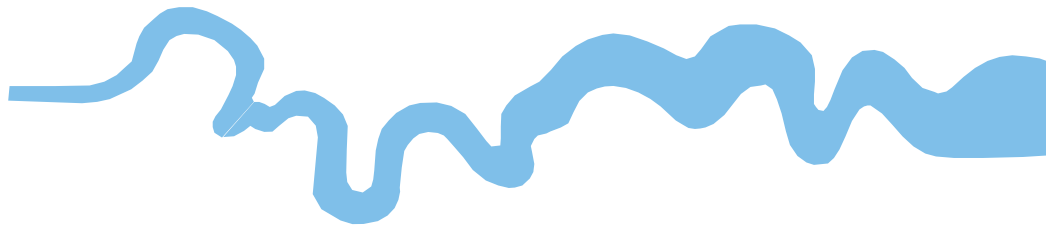
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Plates 5 to 8.**

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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